

REMARKS

The Office Action mailed February 13, 2003, has been reviewed and the comments of the Patent and Trademark Office have been considered. Claims 1-4, 6 and 7 have been amended, and new claim 9 has been added. No new matter has been added. Claims 1-9 are pending for consideration.

Claim amendments

Claims 1-4, 6 and 7 have been amended to place them in better form for U.S. practice. Applicant submits that these amendments do not narrow the scope of the claims, and the amendments are not being done in response to any rejections.

Information Disclosure Statement

Applicant submitted an Information Disclosure Statement ("IDS") on March 7, 2002 in the present application with accompanying Form PTO-1449 listing documents also submitted with the IDS. Applicant respectfully requests that any listed document be considered by the Examiner and be made of record in the present application and that an initialed copy of the Form PTO-1449 be returned in accordance with MPEP §609.

Allowable subject matter

Applicant appreciates the indication that claims 6 and 7 contain allowable subject matter. Applicant has not amended claims 6 and 7 to be in independent form at this time, because, for the reasons given below, applicant believes that claim 1, from which claims 6 and 7 ultimately depend, is patentable.

Rejection under 35 U.S.C. § 102

Claims 1-5 and 8 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,234,558 to Curtindale (hereafter "Curtindale"). Applicant respectfully traverses this rejection for at least the following reasons.

Independent claim 1 is directed to a room lamp for a vehicle. The room lamp as recited includes both a plurality of engagement hooks and a plurality of elastic

engagement hooks protruded from a main lamp body. The plurality of engagement hooks may be respectively engaged with a plurality of engaged sections formed in a roof trim, whereby the lamp main body is temporarily fixed to the roof trim. The plurality of the elastic engagement hooks may be respectively elastically engaged with a plurality of engaged sections formed in a roof panel, whereby the lamp main body is fully fixed to the roof panel. Curtindale does not disclose a number of features of the room lamp for a vehicles as recited in claim 1, as discussed below.

Curtindale discloses an interior trim attachment apparatus for a vehicle (see title). Curtindale discloses one embodiment as illustrated in Fig. 13 that includes a lamp 301 (see col. 4, line 61 to col. 5, line 7). This embodiment includes a bezel 303 and lamp 301 combination. The bezel and lamp combination are secured to a fastener 307 via flanges 311 on the fastener that respectively engage dog houses 309 of the bezel. The fastener also includes three snap legs 313 which engage with a panel 315, which may be a metal body panel, door trim panel, etc. As best understood, according to the rejection, it appears that the bezel 303 and lamp 301 combination correspond to the lamp main body, the fastener 307 corresponds to the roof trim, and the panel 315 corresponds to the roof panel of claim 1.

In contrast to present claim 1, the Curtindale device does not include a plurality of elastic engagement hooks on the bezel and lamp combination (lamp main body). The snap legs 313 of Curtindale (which the Office Action reads on the elastic engagement hooks of the claims) are part of the fastener (roof trim) not the bezel and lamp combination (lamp main body). Also, in the Curtindale device, the means for engaging the bezel and lamp combination (lamp main body) with the fastener (roof trim) are the flanges 311 of the fasteners that engage the dog houses 309. The dog houses 309, however, are not hooks, elastic or otherwise.

Curtindale further lacks the recited feature of claim 1 that the lamp main body is temporarily fixed to the roof trim. In the Curtindale device, the bezel and lamp combination (lamp main body) is engaged with the fastener (roof trim) by relatively rotating the combination and fastener such that the flanges 311 are inserted inside the dog houses 309. Such engagement between the flanges 311 and dog houses 309 is not seen as

temporarily fixing the bezel and lamp combination (lamp main body) with the fastener (roof trim). Instead, because of the expected strength of the engagement of the flanges with the dog houses, this type of engagement would appear to fully fix the bezel and lamp combination (lamp main body) to the fastener (roof trim).

Because Curtindale does not disclose structure for the temporary fixing as recited in claim 1, Curtindale fails to suggest advantages of the structure recited therein. In the present invention, because of the temporary fixing, it is possible to absorb any error in the relative positions in two directions (direction X and direction Y in Fig. 5B) between the elastic engagement hooks and the engaged sections. Curtindale, which does not suggest temporary fixing, would be prone to such an error.

Furthermore, even if the Curtindale device could be interpreted such that the lamp 301, bezel 303 and fastener 307 correspond to the lamp main body of claim 1, Curtindale, still fails to disclose the invention recited in claim 1, because, in this case, Curtindale would not suggest two different pluralities of engagement hooks, each with their own specified function (for temporarily or fully fixing the lamp main body). Even if the snap legs 313 of Curtindale could be considered to correspond to the recited elastic engagement hooks of claim 1, Curtindale does not disclose that the attachment apparatus of Fig. 13 also includes a plurality of engagement hooks that may be respectively engaged with a plurality of engaged sections formed in a roof trim, whereby the lamp is temporarily fixed to the roof trim. The Curtindale attachment apparatus of Fig. 13 only includes the three snap legs 313 for engaging, and these snap legs appear to fully fix the lamp, bezel and fastener to the panel 315.

The Office Action points to element 251 as corresponding to the engagement hooks as recited in claim 1. Element 251, however, cannot be reasonably read on the engagement hooks as recited in claim 1 for a number of reasons. First, element 251 corresponds to the Curtindale embodiment of Fig. 12, not the embodiment of Figure 13, which is the only embodiment with a lamp. Second, element 251 is a coathook (col. 4, lines 52-53), not a hook for engaging trim. Applicant submits that the coathook 251 could not reasonably be used to engage trim, because it is on the opposite side from the snap legs 263 that engage

the trim. Finally, the coathook 251 is a single element, not a plurality of engagement hooks as specified in claim 1.

Accordingly, for at least the reasons given above, applicant respectfully submits that claim 1 is patentable over Curtindale. Claims 2-8 ultimately depend from claim 1 and are patentable for at least the same reasons as claim 1, and for further patentable features recited therein. For example, claim 3 recites a “drop-out preventing piece, brought into contact with said lamp main body at a time when said inclined engagement surface is elastically engaged with the engaged section of said roof panel, is formed in said free end section of each of said elastic engagement hooks.” The snap legs 313 of Curtindale do not include the drop-out preventing piece as recited in claim 3, at least because the snap hooks do not come into contact with a lamp main body when the snap hooks engage the trim.

For the reasons given above, applicant respectfully requests that the rejection of the claims under 35 U.S.C. § 102 be withdrawn.

New claim 9 has been added to more fully recite the invention and is patentable for the same reasons as noted with claim 1.

CONCLUSION

In view of the foregoing amendments and remarks, applicant respectfully submits that all of the pending claims are now in condition for allowance. An early notice to this effect is earnestly solicited. If there are any questions regarding the application, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the number below.

Respectfully submitted,

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Should additional fees be necessary in connection with the filing of this paper, or if a petition for extension of time is required for timely acceptance of same, the Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge Deposit Account No. 19-0741 for any such fees; and applicant(s) hereby petition for any needed extension of time.

Versions with Markings to Show Changes Made

In the Specification:

At first, as shown in Figs. 4(A) and 4(B), the room lamp [14] 20 is temporarily fixed to the roof trim 13 by inserting an upper end of the engagement hook 21b from an engagement hook through hole 13e while forcibly expanding a slit 13f by the front end 21d of the engagement hook 21b and bringing a front end bottom surface of the engagement hook 21b into contact with an upper surface of a peripheral section 13g. That is, two engagement hooks 21b are respectively engaged with two engaged sections 13d of the roof trim 13, whereby the room lamp [14] 20 and the roof trim 13 are modularized. In this instance, the slit 13f closes by itself due to a material property of the roof panel 13, a load of the room lamp [14] 20 or the like.

In the Claims:

1. (Amended) A room lamp for [the] a vehicle comprising:
a lamp main body;
a plurality of engagement hooks protruded from said lamp main body; and
a plurality of elastic engagement hooks protruded from said lamp main body;
wherein the plurality of said engagement hooks [being] are configured to
respectively [engaged] engage with a plurality of engaged sections formed in a roof trim,
whereby said lamp main body is temporarily fixed to said roof trim and said lamp main
body and said roof trim are modularized, [; and]
the plurality of said elastic engagement hooks [being] are configured to respectively
elastically [engaged] engage with a plurality of engaged sections formed in [the] a roof
panel, whereby said lamp main body is fully fixed to said roof panel so as to be integrally
formed with said roof trim,
wherein each of said elastic engagement hooks comprises an inclined engagement
surface which is elastically engaged with said engaged section in a state of being inclined
with respect to said roof panel [is formed in said elastic engagement hook].
2. (Amended) The room lamp for a vehicle according to claim 1, wherein each of
said elastic engagement [hook] hooks is constituted by a bent leaf spring in which a fixed-
end section in one end is fixed to said lamp main body, a free end section in another end

being free with respect to said lamp main body, and said inclined engagement surface is in [the middle are bent] a position between the fixed end section and the free end section.

3. (Amended) The room lamp for a vehicle according to claim 2, wherein a drop-out preventing piece₂ brought into contact with said lamp main body at a time when said inclined engagement surface is elastically engaged with the engaged section of said roof panel₂ is formed in said free end section of each of said elastic engagement [hook] hooks.

4. (Amended) The room lamp for a vehicle according to claim 3, wherein a contact section₂ brought into contact with said lamp main body at a time when said drop-out preventing piece is brought into contact with said lamp main body₂ is formed in said another end side of said [drop-out preventing piece] leaf spring, and an inclined section₂ inclined with respect to said lamp main body₂ is formed between the contact section and said drop-out preventing piece.

6. (Amended) The room lamp for a vehicle according to claim 5, wherein a foamed urethane is employed for said base member, and at least one of [on the contrary,] a felt, a resin, or a non woven fabric [or the like] is employed for said mounting member[, respectively].

7. (Amended) The room lamp for a vehicle according to claim 5, wherein a foamed urethane is employed for said base member[, and [on the contrary,] a sheet fabric is employed for said mounting member[, respectively].